



CAP4Access e-Newsletter No. 3, October 2015

First international expert workshop in Madrid + + + Exploiting Open Government Data for boosting accessibility

Dear Readers,

In mid-September 2015 we took some time off from developing and piloting our tools and headed to Madrid, where we met the members of the project's Advisory Board of Experts to discuss about crowdsourcing and online mapping for accessibility. The occasion was the International Congress on Tourism for All in Madrid, a major European event for discussing the way forward in accessible tourism and related technological innovations. The major force behind the conference is Spain's ONCE, one of the largest foundations for people with disability in Europe and a great example of how an institution like a national lottery system can help raising funds for the cause of promoting accessibility. Accessible tourism is becoming a mainstream concern in more and more countries, as the baby boomer generation enters retirement age without losing their eagerness to travel. No wonder, then, that geoweb applications such as Wheelmap and OpenRouteService's new wheelchair routing feature meet with a lot of interest from stakeholders.

Meanwhile, CAP4Access has continued to exploit the wealth of open data available from Vienna's Open Government Data initiative with the purpose of utilising it for adding accessibility related data to OpenStreetMap (OSM). This will help improve the reliability of wheelchair routing services based on OSM.

Read about these items in this third newsletter of the European CAP4Access project.

The CAP4Access Team

Our first expert workshop at International Congress on Tourism for All, Madrid, Spain

CAP4Access used the occasion of the 5th International Congress on Tourism for All in Madrid, a prestigious conference gathering several hundred experts and practitioners engaged in promoting accessibility in the tourism sector, to organise the first of two expert workshops. Their objective is to discuss our project's achievements with external experts, including the CAP4Access Advisory Board, and to obtain feedback and guidance based on the experience and institutional background of participants. The Madrid Workshop, which took place on 23 – 24 September 2015 at

the Complejo Duques de Pastrana, was a great opportunity to reflect on ways in which crowdsourcing and social innovation can be utilised to boost accessibility in European cities. Some of the feedback obtained at the event is summarised below.

Dr **Ivor Ambrose**, Managing Director of the European Network for Accessible Tourism (ENAT), has been promoting Wheelmap.org for a long time. He stressed its potential to be used also by people who are not disabled (i.e. the “typical” wheelchair users) – a group that makes up two thirds of the target market for accessible tourism. Ambrose also suggested investigating whether municipalities or local NGOs could be entrusted with overlooking and quality-checking Wheelmap data about their city and region.

Dr **Angelika Laburda**, member of the ENAT Board, is a key activist working for accessible tourism in Austria. She stressed the importance of the terminology used to discuss and promote accessibility related issues. The terminology most often used tends to present accessible infrastructure as something sterile and off-putting. No wonder, then, that many tourism promoters consider accessibility as a costly burden rather than an investment in attracting new types of tourists. Laburda recommended marketing accessible tourism as “tourism for all”, and accessible hotel rooms as “family rooms” or “comfort rooms”.

Tatiana Alemán Selva, Technical Director of PREDIF, the Spanish Representative Platform for People with Physical Disabilities, reported about TUR4all, a Geoportal and mobile app about accessible tourism in Spain, fed by the extensive databases set up and maintained by PREDIF. She welcomed the opportunity to seek synergies and identify areas of cooperation between Wheelmap and the other tools further developed by CAP4Access on the one hand, and TUR4all on the other hand.

Dr **David Banes** is CEO of Mada, the Qatar Assistive Technology and Accessibility Center based in Doha in the state of Qatar, one of the leading centres of expertise on accessibility in the Arab world. He recommended to try, wherever possible, to focus on usability of tool interfaces, e.g. for people with visual impairments. Banes also suggested looking beyond collection of data by members of the target group towards analysing data on their behaviour, for example in terms of preferred travel routes. This could help shed light on bottlenecks in infrastructure provision.

Henk Hoff, member of the Board of the OpenStreetMap Foundation, presented the viewpoint of the OSM community, i.e. the group of active contributors to OSM who collectively decide about any major change to the way the platform works. He welcomed the decision to add a toilet accessibility feature to Wheelmap.org as an example of how little changes to the mapping process can have a major impact on the ability of people with mobility restrictions to plan trips within the city. Hoff expects the OSM community to show strong interest in the project’s work on visualisation and quality assessment of OSM data.

Martina Götz from the City of Heidelberg (Germany) is responsible for Heidelberg Hürdenlos (Barrier-free Heidelberg), an official online city guide for people with disabilities. Heidelberg Hürdenlos data is currently being converted into Wheelmap compatible format and will then be uploaded to Wheelmap.org. A link referring Wheelmap users to the much more detailed data available on Heidelberg Hürdenlos

will be displayed whenever Wheelmap users access data about one of the places contained in Hürdenlos.

Michiel Desmet and **Karl Thiry** represented **On Wheels**, an initiative and online application focused on the accessibility of public places in Belgium and beyond. Data collection is carried out by volunteers based on a template provided by On Wheels. Rather than offering a simple rating system (as used by Wheelmap), On Wheels stores data on the size of doors, steps, pathways, toilet rooms, landings, rails and the like, and then offers users personalised information based on their profile (e.g. size of one's wheelchair and the height of steps one can mount). Speaking from their very successful experience in obtaining support from the Flemish media, Desmet and Thiry emphasised the need to "sell" the accessibility issue through a "positive story", rather than as a story of wide scale exclusion. They also recommended to experiment with gamification approaches as a means to attract contributors.

Exploiting Open Government Data for boosting accessibility

Vienna has one of the most advanced open data policies of any European city. The Austrian capital, which is one of the four pilot sites of CAP4Access, makes a vast array of rich data sets available as part of its Open Government Data Initiative (OGD), reaching far beyond the typical offerings found elsewhere. OGD Vienna offers several accessibility-related data sets such as road and sidewalk surfaces and kerbs, acoustic and tactile signals, elevators in stations, parking for people with disabilities, and a precise elevation model. CAP4Access is exploring these data sets to check whether and how they can be combined with or integrated into the mapping platform OpenStreetMap (OSM).

An example of a dataset which is relevant for accessibility mapping is position and height of dropped kerbs, i.e. segments of the sidewalk where the kerb has been lowered to help wheelchair users and powered mobility vehicles cross the road safely. CAP4Access partner, Fraunhofer IAIS, has converted Vienna's dropped kerb dataset into a format which is suitable for import into OSM, making this information available to the entire OSM community.

Why is this important? Once the positions of dropped kerbs and their locations in the OSM streets are known, we will be able to optimise the OSM-based wheelchair routing and navigation tools which the project develops. If we know where a street can be safely crossed by a wheelchair user we can plan ideal routes, and re-plan them when an existing dropped kerb is blocked or impassable. One such use for the kerb data is the University of Heidelberg's brand new wheelchair profile on openrouteservice.org. A beta version of this wheelchair routing tool is available online at: <http://openls.geog.uni-heidelberg.de/wheelchair-test/>.

News

CAP4Access cooperates with National Trails and Walk Unlimited to explore accessible hiking trails in the UK

CAP4Access partner Mapping for Change has started working with the National Trails and Walk Unlimited to collect information about accessibility along trails in the United Kingdom. The National Trails stretch across 2,500 miles of England and Wales, and many of them are at least partly accessible for people with limited mobility. However, lack of information about accessibility will detain many people with limited mobility from getting out and enjoying them. This is all the more frustrating since many of the trails have even had extensive works completed to make them accessible. Through a number of mapping events at different parts of the National Trail network, CAP4Access along with keen volunteers is collecting all the necessary details to produce informative accessibility guides in the future. If you want to know more, visit MyAccessible.EU, or contact Rebecca Payne, r.payne@mappingforchange.org.uk.

CAP4Access at conferences in autumn 2015

The European Data Forum (EDF) is a meeting place for industry, research, policy-makers and community initiatives to discuss the challenges of big data and the emerging data economy and to develop suitable action plans for addressing these challenges. The 2015 edition of the event will take place in Luxembourg, 16 – 17 November 2015. CAP4Access will be there to present its work on "Utilising Viennese Geographic Open Government Data For Better Inclusion Of Mobility-Impaired Persons". See <http://2015.data-forum.eu> for more information.

Vienna, according to recent surveys one of the most livable cities in the world, hosted the **Walk21 Conference** on 20 – 23 October 2015. Under the motto "Stepping Ahead", the conference promoted activities and innovations towards the future of resilient cities and healthy living environments. CAP4Access partner Centre for social Innovation (ZSI) was there to present its piloting activities involving university students and pupils from Vienna. Visit <http://walk21vienna.com> to find out more.

Find out about the impact of the European Commission's CAPS initiative

CAP4Access is co-funded under the European Commission's so-called CAPS initiative, which stands for "Collective Awareness Platforms for Sustainability and Social Innovation": online platforms that create awareness of sustainability problems and offer collaborative solutions based on networks of people, of ideas, of sensors, thereby enabling new forms of social innovation. Impact4you.eu is a platform dedicated to spreading the word about the full range of CAPS projects and promoting digital social innovation in general. The platform offers anyone interested or active in the field of social innovation the opportunity to voice their opinion about individual CAPS initiatives and discuss about their impact at societal level.

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